

S E C R E T

IDEA-0261-69

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19 March 1969

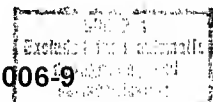
MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Special Activities

SUBJECT: Snow Survey Project

1. This memorandum contains a recommendation for your approval in paragraph 4.
2. In January 1969, the Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA), U.S. Department of Commerce, submitted a request to COMIREX through Dr. Donald H. Steininger, White House, Office of Science Technology, for support in a program to investigate the usefulness of satellite photography in the assessment of snow cover. The Committee on Imagery Requirements Exploitation of COMIREX requested the cooperation of the Office of Special Activities. OSA, utilizing the assets of Detachment G, agreed to provide T-35 tracker film coverage to specific snow areas of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Ranges. ESSA is concerned that abnormally heavy snow fall this year will cause flooding problems in California communities in late Spring. ESSA has standard ground based snow measuring devices in place and analysis of the T-35 film may provide a more comprehensive and accurate forecast of water runoff. OSA has provided three rolls of unclassified T-35 tracker film to Mr. Donald Baker of ESSA and will be providing more. Mr. Baker is cleared SI and T, TK. He is highly enthusiastic and appreciative of the photo results to date and because of the serious flood potential that is evident from the photos, has requested approval to show selected blow-ups to Gov. Ronald Reagan of California.
3. Although the tracker film is unclassified and poses no security problems when limited to study by members of ESSA, consideration must be given to implications of showing blow-ups to Gov. Reagan and possibly to the news media. Questions are likely to arise concerning the origin of the photos.

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4. Two cover story alternatives are presented for your consideration:

(a) Answer initial questions by referring to the photos as coming from a USAF reconnaissance aircraft, then if pressed for further details regarding type of equipment or camera utilized, explain that the equipment is classified.

(b) Acknowledge truthfully that the snow photography emanates from Weather Reconnaissance Squadron IV at Edwards AFB. This is the published designation of the Agency U-2 unit at Edwards. Identify the aircraft involved in taking the photography as the U-2. In the event of questions regarding the type of photographic equipment utilized explain that it is classified. However, this information should not be volunteered. At our initiative, years ago weather photographs depicting hurricane eyes were published in open literature and, in support of existing cover stories, were attributed to U-2 Weather Reconnaissance Units. It is recommended alternative 4b be approved.

25X1A

ROBERT W. GAMBINO
Chief, Security Staff,
OSA

CONCUR:

SIGNED

SA/Cover/OSA

Recommendation in Para 4 APPROVED

Acting Director of Special Activities

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